

# Innovative education program needs to be duplicated

By Emory Curtis  
Special to Sentinel-Voice

Public schools should borrow an idea many successful American businesses use: Copy a proven concept and improve it.

If public school educators and administrators had that business copycat instinct, they would be aware of a University of Southern California-sponsored program that is turning sixth grade "C" students into high school graduates with collegiate-level intellect and skills.

Last year, 27 students who started the program in the seventh grade graduated.

Thirteen are now in USC on full scholarships; 10 are in a community college; two are in the California State University system and one is in

the University of California system. Only one is not in school.

Thirteen students joined the program after the seventh grade; seven of them are at USC on academic scholarships, five are in community colleges and one is in another university.

This year, 53 students will graduate. Thirty-one of them started with the program in the seventh grade; 25 joined later.

To date, 29 have been offered academic scholarships to USC.

The numbers are impressive. Furthermore, any operation taking groups of sixth grade "C" students from under performing elementary schools in low-income areas and making them into college material should be emulated.

Dr. James Fleming, director of USC's Neighborhood Academic Initiative program, sells parents on the value of education. In turn, the college gives 50 full four-year scholarships each year to students from USC's immediate area if they meet entrance requirements. Most of the children will be first-generation college students.

The intensity of the NAI program requires parents, guardians or responsible adults to play an integral role.

To bring those students up to speed, Fleming has a rigorous course for students and parents to follow.

Fleming says parents inspire and guide children and that changing a child's attitude

about education requires parents to change attitudes.

Parents in the program agreed to making sure their children studied three hours each day and accepted that their children had to go to USC each morning at 7:30 a.m. for sessions before going to regular school and had to stay two hours after school two days a week for study and tutoring.

Parents also had to attend four-hour sessions at USC each Saturday while their children participated in their own sessions.

USC's NAI program is questioning the widely held view that low income parents are not concerned about the education of their children. The program needs to be copied.

## Jordan

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We Do It," I got their attention but later in that album I hit them with a song like "Daddy's Home" which talks about fathers taking care of their responsibility. So with my current release there's balance. There are beautiful sensual songs but also songs like "I Say Yes." And again, my lifestyle reflects a spiritual lifestyle. I've been married nearly four years and we have a baby daughter. God is truly the root of my household. I want the new CD to let people know that we're all human and that we can experience love positively, on different levels.

**Scoop:** The song "Missing You" is dedicated to your daughter.

**Jordan:** Yes, she's my little 'boo-boo.' I wrote that song for her while I was on the road. She was only about two-weeks old at the time. Being away from her was so tough on me. My wife would keep me updated on all the little things she was doing, like smiling and everything. She's now almost two and the song is now like a lullaby for her. The music is kind of dreamy so it makes her sleepy — especially

when she tries to sing along with it.

**Scoop:** Most people don't know you're tall.

**Jordan:** I'm six foot eight! And no, basketball was never a calling for me. I'm not a good basketball player but I do love the game. People always mistake me for an NBA player — especially when I'm walking through airports. I'm a big Laker fan too!

**Scoop:** Since Los Angeles Laker center Shaquille O'Neal recently signed a new recording deal, is there any chance you two may get together on a project?

**Jordan:** There's a good chance of that. Shaq and I have this funny relationship. Aside from working in show business, we both pledged national Black fraternities. I'm a member of Kappa Alpha Psi Inc. and he's a member of Omega Psi Phi — he's a Q. Both frats are friendly rivals. So whenever I see Shaq doing his Q-Dog thing, I in turn do my Kappa thing! It's a little funny ongoing thing we have with each other. But I'm sure that we're going to work together on something eventually.

## Computer

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resources geared to the specific needs of adults.

In our inimitable fashion, we've been taking that imperfect environment and adjusting it to meet our needs. That's where the business opportunity lies. Practically all American computer companies have sourced their manufacturing off-shore in Asia. That means much of your hard-earned dollars spent for computers floated away.

Given that technology is one of the boom fields for the 21st century, it provides an opportunity to create a company based on meeting the specific demands of African-American computer buyers, either as a stand-alone firm or in alliance with existing

manufacturers here or offshore.

None of the existing firms have any sales channels in inner cities nor in Africa or the Caribbean. There is not only a demand for a manufacturer but also a retail company that would focus on these markets.

During the recent "African-Americans in the Digital Age: Learning and Earning on the Internet" conference, Dr. Frank Greene, one of the pioneers of Silicon Valley and managing member of New Vista Venture Capital, discussed how his group is putting \$40 million into developing the next wave of Black computer companies. He was joined by Carl McCarden, a vice president of Centerex, which arranges deals with Japanese firms.

## Welfare

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higher rate than other women; the procedures are paid for by Medicaid, the federal and state health program for the poor. In the quarter ending December 1991, the abortion rate for New Jersey's welfare population

was 27 per 1,000 women compared with four per 1,000 for all New Jersey women of childbearing age.

While the state and nationwide abortion rate declined between 1991 and 1996, the abortion rate among

New Jersey's welfare recipients rose during that same period, the report said.

By 1996, the gap increased further, with 29 abortions per 1,000 women receiving welfare, compared with three per 1,000 women in the general population, the report said.

In a May 14 letter to the researchers, state health department officials criticized the study's methodology, saying that the policy changes may have altered the welfare population, causing some recipients to get off welfare and others to avoid it.

Rutgers researchers would not comment on the state's request to revise the report.

## Land

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Association, Inc., has protested, litigated and met with high-level government officials without an equitable solution. It is evident that the discriminatory practices of the Federal government have resulted in a major decrease in the number of black farmers in this country," Mfume said.

He added: "All persons who believe in what is right must join together to urge the Federal government to settle the claims of the black farmers and to take affirmative steps to ensure that discriminatory practices across the country are eliminated."

## Pro-voucher group creates \$200M scholarship fund for poor

Special to Sentinel-Voice

NEW YORK — A group of supporters of private school vouchers on Tuesday announced the creation of a \$200 million scholarship fund for poor families in big cities.

The Children's Scholarship Fund, started by venture capitalist Ted Forstmann and John Walton, heir to the Wal-Mart store chain, will allow at least 50,000 children to receive scholarships to private or parochial schools by the 1999-2000 school year.

Forstmann and Walton were joined at a news conference by former Disney president Michael Ovitz, the Los Angeles fund-raising chairman, NYC Mayor Rudolph Giuliani and former Rep. Floyd Flake, D-N.Y.

Forstmann and Walton pledged to put up

a total of \$100 million. The rest is to be matched by individuals in cities nationwide.

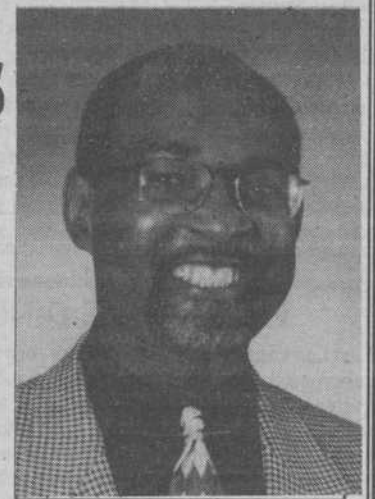
The fund's contributions have been matched in New York, Los Angeles, Chicago, Washington and Jersey City, N.J. The group hopes eventually to expand to as many as 50 other cities.

The children who will participate will be selected by lottery.

Similar privately funded voucher programs around the nation have proven wildly popular with parents. In New York for example, about 22,000 applications for the Choice Scholarship Program are received each year for just 1,000 slots.

The group said its intent is not to undermine public education but to strengthen it by providing competition.

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